

**OLD EGYPTIAN LIBRARIANS**

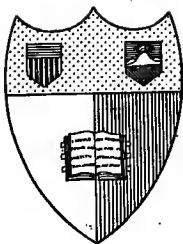
**BY ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON**

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**Some old Egyptian librarians, by Ernest**



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## **SOME OLD EGYPTIAN LIBRARIANS**



**SOME OLD EGYPTIAN  
LIBRARIANS**

**BY**

**ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON**

**NEW YORK  
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To  
G. D. E. R.



## PREFACE

The first of these papers was read at the meeting of the New York Library Association, held at Columbia University, September 28, 1911; the second contains matter necessarily omitted from the first paper from limitations of time. The papers are wholly from original sources in the sense that no statements are made on the authority of secondary sources and effort has been made to use only translations by acknowledged experts; it is, however, founded on translations, not on the original texts. A very brief account of the best or most accessible of the sources used is given in the appendix.

ERNEST CUSHING RICHARDSON.

*Princeton, N. J.*

*September twenty-ninth, 1911.*



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I  
SOME OLD  
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There are two apologies for introducing this topic at a session set apart for college librarians: first because the moral of the paper is pointed at the University and second because there is some reason to suppose that the Old Egyptian colleges were conducted in libraries and by librarians—were in short library-universities if not university libraries.

That the schools of ancient Egypt were library-universities in the sense that they were held in libraries by librarians, two examples will suggest. In the famous first Anastasi Papyrus (as quoted in Erman, p. 380), the eloquent son of Nennofre describes himself as “proficient in the sacred writings . . . powerful in the work of Seshait; a servant of the God

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Thoth in the House of Books . . . .  
teacher in the Hall of Books". It is probably not necessary to explain that the House of Books and Hall of Books and Case of Books were common technical terms for the library according as a chest or room or whole building was applied to the purpose. It may be necessary however, to explain that any priest of the book-gods Seshait or Thoth was by that very token likely to be a library employee of some sort even when it is not, as in this case, more explicitly described. The servant of Thoth might, of course, be a writer rather than a keeper of books, but, in the earliest dates, the servant of Thoth or Seshait, whether found acting as author, copyist, or architect, was also a keeper of books. We have, at any event, in this case, clearly a teacher in the Hall of Books and this Hall, with equal clearness, was not a scriptorium but the place of books for use. It is worth noting in-



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cidentally, as a side light on the librarians of the time, that this librarian-professor says "I had mounted the horse that belonged to me", which may indicate that he was a man of athletic tastes or the contrary, but which does suggest that the office of university librarian was well enough thought of (thousands of years ago) to pay more than enough for the bare necessities of life.

The second example shows that the palace school was also held in the library, for it appears that when King Chufu's grandson went to school he, like the children of plainer parents who were brought up in the palace with the royal children, became a "writer in the House of Books". It is to be remembered that the idea of an education in the earliest days seems to have been chiefly, or wholly, bound up with this idea of writing. The other two R's were merely incidental. Every educated man, every graduate of a

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sacred college, a palace school or a Treasury school, was a scribe, or writer, just as everyone in the Middle Ages was a cleric, or clerk, and every college graduate used to be a Bachelor of Arts. He might be a military or treasury or stable, temple, palace or library scribe but if he was an educated man, in whatever field, he was a "scribe", and it may be added, if a scribe, then an official also.

It is worth while adding too that these old library-universities were also library schools in something of the modern sense, for it is said of one such school that it was for the training of "every sort of scribes" and this must have included among others the scribes of the library. It will be noticed that since this was for education in *all the professions*, it was a true university.

As for the other excuse, it may be said that to any one who has watched the progress of excavation work in the eastern

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Mediterranean region during the past twenty years, in view of the College curriculum and of graduate studies, it becomes increasingly clear that Egypt and Babylonia at least must soon take a much larger place in University thought than they now do. Granted that nothing can take the place of Greek in the matter of finish or in the making of a polished mind, yet in one prime element of human cultivation something has arisen which quite supersedes it. This is the element which used to be described as "antiquity" or "antiquities". Polish is the perfection of education in two dimensions but "antiquity" is what adds the third dimension and makes a surface a solid body. The history of human civilization having now moved back, cultivated men must have a perspective of three thousand years at least more than Greece or Judea can give. Greek has become a modern language and the hey-day of Greek history was far

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back of the middle point between oldest Egypt and to-day. Library histories used to begin with the Alexandrian library but some of the librarians to be mentioned to-day lived longer before the founder of the Alexandrian library than the latter did before our day. Without pretending that the Egyptian language can compare in culture value with the most perfect language ever invented for the expression of occidental ideas, as Greek most certainly is, it may be fairly said that the archaeology, at least, of Egypt is quite comparable with that of Greece in power, if not in exquisiteness, and that too in architecture, social or civil institutions or even moral ideas, if indeed the best of the philosophical ideas of Greece were not also borrowed from Egypt without improvement. Add to this the sheer antiquity of it and you have an element of undergraduate culture which cannot long be neglected in the college curriculum.

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And when it comes to post graduate work the matter is more obvious still. Here is the chance now to quarry out great blocks of fresh material where the classical scholars are, even with their own great finds by excavation, hardly more than working over the chips of former colossal work into statuette theses. If universities are backward in this fascinating as well as fundamental field, university librarians must share the blame with the rest. While they cannot go very far ahead of the general opinion of the university in getting books, they can at least do something by way of providing readable books for undergraduates, and they can at least do research work as to their own lines in these fields.

A chief point of this paper is therefore to suggest how much unworked material there is about library matters in ancient Egypt. The very excellent article on libraries in the new Britannica has good,

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though still scanty, gleanings from this field, but in general it is very little worked. As lately as 1905 a very excellent writer in a very admirable encyclopaedia says that the most ancient library of which we have precise knowledge is that of Assurbanipal (668-626 B.C.) and that while in Egypt there must have been collections of papyrus rolls and, while Diodorus speaks of the library of Ramses II, and two officials of Ramses' time are described as librarians, no details are known of the early Egyptian libraries. As a matter of fact we know almost as much about the palace library of Ikhnaton in say 1370 B.C. as we do about that of Assurbanipal—we know its location in the palace and something of its ground plan and a couple of hundred of the tablet-books contained are still extant. What is more, we have its official name and the still existing stamped bricks on which it is called “the place of the records of the palace of the king”.

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We know again that a certain temple library, a hundred years before that, contained a certain historical work on a leather roll and that the palace library of king Nefirikere, 1300 years earlier still or say 2750 B.C., had medical papyri in portable cases—which shows that both palace and temple libraries were more than mere archives—and there are scores of other details like these.

To go into all these details is, however, too big a task for a short paper and this one therefore proposes to limit its field, first, by cutting out details of libraries which are not at least half a millennium older than that “oldest library of which we have details” (i. e. before Assurbani-pal), second, by excluding details concerning building, books and methods of administration except as they appear incidentally; third, by excluding the more doubtful and obscure references, and finally it is to be feared that lack of time

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may make it necessary to cut out the less interesting and informing references.

The very title of this paper has amused some, quite as if they thought the subject would be exhausted by the sentence "there were none", but nevertheless the paper is in sober historical earnest. It, in fact, proposes, among other things, to introduce to you by name and date and with some details of their lives, not always wholly without piquancy, twenty-one librarians who lived long before Assurbanipal, and by the same token, much longer before the Alexandrian library was founded. Moreover this paper makes no pretence of exhaustiveness—it is only a desultory beginning in a rich field. It is a mere sample so to speak of the wealth of material which has not yet gotten much into the encyclopaedias—or the universities. So much for the moral.

If this account of Egyptian librarians begins with the librarians of the gods,



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Thoth and Seshait please do not think that the paper is to be legendary or mythological in character; on the contrary, it will deal with real human librarians and the genuine historical monuments of these librarians in papyri or inscriptions. The mythological librarians, however, have two great virtues: first they embody the philosophy of books and libraries current among the Egyptians and second these gods were in fact the gods of the librarians themselves, seriously worshipped by them. The significance of this latter fact for the biographical interpretation of historical human librarians is very great, for as a man's god is, so is he. Tell me a man's god and I will tell you the character of the man. There is a sound psychological reason for this, since a man's god is that on which his thoughts most dwell (or conversely that on which one's thoughts most dwell is one's god) and what our thoughts dwell upon as ideal

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that we become. And if, farther, a man's ideal of his profession is made personal, whether that person be human or divine, this hero worship, or god worship, works all the more powerfully. Not to know Thoth is thus to miss the key to the Egyptian librarian, for Thoth was the ideal of the Egyptian librarian, constantly in his mind for imitation.

And it must be confessed that in character Thoth is not a bad ideal for any one—nor in activities either, for that matter, though one must pass some strictures on that feature of his library economy which consisted in converting so far as possible all his library into kept books or secret writings—caviar to the general. Yet, as we shall see, he was not so much the god of the private library and confidential archives as he was public librarian trying to issue only fit books to fit persons for proper use. You may be spared the other book gods since when they act as

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book gods they may be regarded as different manifestations of these two, but of Seshait and of Thoth it is needful to know something in order to understand the mind of the Egyptian librarian.

The oldest and greatest of Egyptian librarians was then the god Thoth, the Moon god, Hermes to the Greeks, Mercury to the Romans, Nabu to the Babylonians, scribe of the gods. It is true that Seshait, the wife of Thoth is hardly less old and is expressly called the "Lady of libraries", but if Seshait is "Mistress of the Hall of books" on the base of one door of the library of the Ramesseum, Thoth, is called "Lord of the Hall of Books" on the other. Those therefore who take alarm at the rapid feminisation of libraries and might feel badly to think that the patron divinity of libraries was a goddess, may take comfort in the fact that the great god of libraries was in truth masculine and Seshait only his better half—and

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that too in the days when it took many individuals to make one better half.

Seshait is called upon the monuments "She who draws in her horns, mistress of writings, mistress of building, the lady of libraries". She is thus patron of architects as well as of librarians and she is farther the goddess of history. The title "She who draws in her horns" has been variously explained but, remembering that she is the moon goddess, it seems to point clearly to the waxing or the waning moon. It would be interesting to show how in her character of Hathor she carries to Ra the books of Thoth as a sort of library page, and also to trace her in Tefnut, the lion goddess, Nephthys and all her other forms, but time forbids.

As for Thoth, a book could be written on his librarian aspects. He is the god of learning, numbering, and measuring, giver of written words "lord of the sacred writings". He is founder of all the sciences,

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creator of heaven and earth by his words, the god who raises from the dead also by his words, and who weighs and records a man's deeds at the final judgment. He personifies expressions of all sorts as Horus does thought, and he is the historical prototype of the Logos of Plato, Philo, and St. John.

Two chapters of the Book of the Dead (182-3) are hymns to Osiris, supposed to be spoken by Thoth himself, and in these we are supposed to have his own idea of his own ideals. "I am Thoth the perfect scribe", he says, "whose hands are pure, who opposes every evil deed, who writes down justice and who hates every wrong, he who is the writing reed of the inviolate god, the lord of laws, whose words are written and whose words have dominion over the two earths".

Note that Thoth is the god of righteousness, lord of laws; and note that the written words have dominion. Later this

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came to relate to the magic which played so great a part in Egyptian life. Books were kept from the common people because the written words gave superhuman power. Later you will hear of a librarian who possibly lost his life because he incautiously and contrary to the rules loaned out a book of magic to the wrong persons.

Again Thoth says "I am Thoth the favorite of Ra . . . the lord of laws, who pacifies the two earths by the power of his wisdom . . . who drives away enmity and dispels quarrels" . . . Mr. Carnegie, you see, was not the first to unite the patronage of libraries with a propaganda of arbitration in both hemispheres.

Once more Thoth says: "I am the lord of justice, the witness of right before the gods; I direct the words so as to make the wronged victorious; I am Thoth the lord of justice, who giveth victory to him who

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is injured and who taketh the defense of the oppressed.”

A noble practical ideal for any librarian is it not? And after all is not this the very key note of real education? It is, always has been, and, by the nature of things, everlastingly must be true that learning is the irresistible weapon of the weak against the strong and the strong against the stronger—not learning for itself but learning dominated by a burning zeal for justice and righteousness, the “two truths” of Thoth. In the present social unrest, economics is not the keyword of salvation but learning bent on justice and on righteousness.

Again Thoth says: “I have come to thee; my hands bring (Truth) Maāt; my heart does not contain any falsehood; I offer the Maāt before thy face; I know her; I swear by her.”

This interesting passion for truth is a constant note in the Egyptian inscriptions

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and corresponds with the finest spirit of modern science while it points also to the foundation sore of modern social conditions—the decay, not of regard for public law, but regard for that law which a man makes for himself by giving his word.

Finally Thoth says: “I have dispelled darkness and driven away the storm; I have given the sweet breaths of the North . . . I give Ra to set as Osiris and Osiris to be setting as Ra. I give him to enter the mysterious cave in order to revive the heart of him whose heart is motionless.” “I am Thoth, who giveth Osiris victory over his enemies; I am Thoth who prepares tomorrow and also foresees what will come afterwards; his action is not in vain when he settles what is in the sky, the earth, and the Tuat, and when he gives life to the future ones.”

It is too long a story to tell how Ra, the Sun-god, setting as Osiris becomes Thoth, the moon god, who in turn sets in



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the rising sun of the new day, and how this is applied to death and the resurrection. It is still less possible to set forth in detail how the spirit which revives the heart of the dead is knowledge, or how, when Thoth gives life to the future ones, it is by means of Truth and through the agency of writings, but the whole story up to the final judgment in the hall of the Two Truths and the everlasting life where Truth is food and drink for the immortals is one of profound and noble symbolism, fascinating in interest to book lovers.

The symbols of Thoth are the ibis or ibis-headed man and, what is a bit painful at first sight to librarians, the ape. There is not time to expound the many and subtle ideas which turn in and around the various aspects or incarnations of Thoth—even to dwell a little, as was intended, on his seven assistants, who may be supposed to be the patron gods of sub-librarians. As a sample, however, a few

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words about the ape-symbol may be pardoned.

These "cynocephalous apes" were, you remember to begin with, real apes, really worshipped. They are the lords of writing, of music, of the sciences, and the totem so to speak of the library tribe. They stand for Thoth, for the full moon, and for the sun at the equinox. At first sight, as has been said, it is a bit shocking to find one's trade symbolized by the monkey tribe, but when one looks at the facts and considers how the Egyptians looked at them, there is balm in Gilead, for it will be remembered that most of the Egyptian gods had their symbols and we may, to begin with, comfort ourselves with the fact that Seshait, in one of her forms, is the lion goddess. Moreover, if the cow, the cat, the dog, the jackal, were honorable symbols, much more so the ape, highest of all animals in intelligence. And, indeed, this is what the Egyptians meant,

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for the apes were used as symbol because the Egyptians said there was a certain race of apes which knew how to write. When, therefore, they chose their specimens to serve them as gods, the priests would give pen and ink to them to try them and see if they belonged to the right race. There is, Lanzone says, a legend among the Arabs to-day that the apes formerly knew how to write, but for their sins had had the power withdrawn by the Creator. It would be a little rash to say that the Egyptians invented the Darwinian hypothesis, but in these days when the comparative psychologists have taken away speech and even reason as distinctive of man and have left to him as distinctive only the ability to permanently record his thoughts in writing, it is of interest to note that the Egyptians had singled out writing as characteristic of that missing link, the lost race of the writing ape. It only remains for some wise person to

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show that the pithecanthropos of Haeckel and the lost cynocephalous ape are one and we may offer farther this bibliographical contribution to the research. In Egyptian lore, the ape not only writes, but sits upon the middle point of the balances, standing thus for equilibrium, and, further, in his astronomical aspect he is the equinox, from which two things it is an easy step to see in him the missing link between man and animal, as in his character of moon god he is the link between Tum, the setting sun, and Shu, the rising sun. These four apes, harbingers of the day, who sit upon the prow of the barque of Ra and live upon truth, are Thoth, the moon god, Lord of Truth.

Passing thus, strictly according to the manner of modern evolution, from the gods upward to man, by way of the ape, we come to the human librarians.

The earliest systematic history known to literature is the book of annals of the

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Egyptian kings found on the Palermo stone. Although the work in its present form dates only from 2721 B.C., the part containing the history of the early dynasties back to 3400 is known, from linguistic and chronological evidence, to be contemporary with the events recorded. The work is therefore a true chronicle or journal, like the Hebrew book of days or the annals of Thutmose III. In this chronicle, about fifteen years before the end of the first dynasty, or about 3200 B.C. it is officially recorded that the priest of Seshait "stretched the cord" for the house called Thrones-of-the-gods, the design for which had been prepared the previous year. This recalls the fact that a dozen centuries later under Sesostris I, at the beginning of a temple in Heliopolis, it was "the scribe of the sacred book" who stretched the cord. This ceremony of stretching the cord or laying out the ground plan of the temple, corresponded

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to our ceremony of laying the cornerstone, and in later times it seems always to have been performed by the king himself. In these earlier times, however, the process seems to have been conducted by the architect. The priest of Seshait was, as before noticed, always a librarian-architect in those days and the two ceremonies, one about 3200 B.C. and one about 2000 (say 1980) B.C. were practically the same, although in the one case it was the priest of Seshait and in the other the scribe of the sacred book, that is the librarian of the secret books of Thoth, who performed the ceremony. The designing of the previous year, like all such designing, as will be seen, was doubtless preceded by a careful study in the libraries of the necessary conditions and was doubtless done in the House of Books and under the direction of the anonymous priest who "stretched the cord".

Just before the time when these an-

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nals of which we have been speaking end, or about 2750 B. C., lived Henhathor "scribe of the king's records", the son of Nekonetkh "king's confidant to Userkaf", first king of the fifth dynasty. He is mentioned in three documents and with him, on a certain statute of his father, is mentioned also an "inferior scribe of the king's records"—the librarian thus and the assistant librarian of the king's archives. Henhathor's father in these documents bequeathes his office and the land which went with it to be divided between his sons, each to have the office of priest a month about, but, inasmuch as there were thirteen sons, one month and its land had to be divided between two, and quite properly as we may think the librarian son seems to have been the favored one and made residuary heir of all the father's estate or was it perhaps because he was the most needy?

The most powerful man at the court of

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King Dedkere-Isesi (2683-2655 B. C.) was the "chief judge, vizier, chief architect, chief scribe of the king's writings, Senezemib", a not uncommon combination of titles which the king himself uses of him in a letter concerning his plans for a lake (or garden) in the palace Isesi. In the inscription put upon the tomb of Senezemib by his son Mehi it tells how Senezemib as "master of secret things of his majesty" attended his majesty while he was in the place of writings. The editor remarks in a note that the king thus "visited the public archives in company with the vizier", but, while it was the vizier who accompanied him, it was, of course, in his capacity of chief librarian that he did so.

It may be remarked at this point that the king's court or council (of thirty?) seems always, during a good part of Egyptian history, to have included *ex-officio* the chief librarian of the palace ar-



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chives and a librarian of the sacred writings. We have here the case where one of them attained, as several later did, the supreme honor of being the king's vizier. It should be noted also that Senezemib was chief judge, for this has its bearing in the later biographies, where librarians appear as judges in criminal cases.

Senezemib's son built for him a tomb, which took a year and three months in building, and he provided also a suitable endowment for keeping up the proper religious rites connected with it. This endowment included the support of mortuary priests to make the usual offerings and apparently included a perpetual grant by the king for the offerings, confirmed by royal decree sealed "with the seal of writing". The son had this deed of endowment "put into writing" and doubtless properly recorded in the record office, but it was also, as he says, "engraved by the artists" on the walls of the tomb together

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with the two letters which the "king himself" wrote with his own fingers in order to praise Senezemib, and an account of his searching with him in the library in the preliminary investigations concerning matter of the artificial lake.

Just about one hundred years later in the reign of King Pepi I (2590-2570), Khenu, the scribe of the king's records, appears as member of an expedition to Hammamat to secure stone for Pepi's pyramid at Sakkara.

Under the second King Pepi (2566-2476), who followed the first Pepi after an interim of 4 years, an overseer of the king's records again attains the viziership. Zau, the son of Khui, and his wife, Nebet, was overseer of the king's records, chief justice, and vizier like Senezemib, but it does not appear from the inscriptions that he was architect or had any relationship with the public works. He was doubly a "prophet", chief ritual priest, sem

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priest, wearer of the royal seal, and master of all wardrobes.

It is to be noted that he is master of *all* wardrobes. Some wardrobes were certainly true wardrobes in that they contained the ritual garments of the gods, and it was one of the duties of the master of the wardrobe to clothe the image of the god at the public festivals, but the wardrobes contained also the secret things in general, including probably "the secret writings" so often mentioned. Indeed, the wardrobes were likely the treasure chests such as in later times and other lands contained clothing or books or any other treasure. This, however, is to be taken as probable rather than proved.

This Prince Zau had five brothers, all named Zau, and two sisters, both named Enekhnes-Merire, both of whom were married to King Pepi I. One of these sisters was the mother of King Mernere, successor of Pepi, and the other of Pepi

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II who was, therefore, nephew of Zau. From this it is clear that this "overseer of the king's records" did not lack for influence. It appears that he was already living in the reign of Pepi I, but when he died it is hard to say even approximately. Evidently he died in the reign of Pepi II, which began in 2566, but as Pepi's reign is the longest in all history, covering ninety years, it does not fix the date of his death within very narrow limits.

During the next five hundred years there were doubtless librarians but the writer of this paper has not yet found any sure reference to them. Then comes the anonymous Scribe of the Sacred Book who stretched the cord for the temple in Heliopolis, as before mentioned, and as recorded on a leather roll, copied five hundred years after from the lost inscription of Sesostris I, recording how the king in 1977 B. C. called together his court to consider building or rebuilding a temple

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to the Sun God. As has been already suggested and as will later appear specifically in regard to such undertakings, there was undoubtedly one, if there were not two, librarians among the "companions of the court" with whom the king took counsel at this time, and indeed it appears that it was of the librarians that he first took counsel.

Shortly after this and during the same reign of Sesostris I, Mentuhotep, master of secret things of the house of sacred writings and also master of the king's writings of the royal presence as well as secret things of the "divine words" (or hieroglyphics) and prophet of Maât, (goddess of truth) became vizier and chief judge. Mentuhotep conducted the work in the temple and on the sacred barque, dug the lake, and masoned the well at Abydos. A tomb was built for him by royal decree at Abydos, recording, in the language of the decree, "all thy

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offices and all pleasing things which thou didst". These inscriptions are so filled through and through with references to his proceeding and his ideals, so obviously colored by the examples of Thoth, that it is worth reading in full this biographical record.

### INSCRIPTIONS OF MENTUHOTEP:

Hereditary prince, vizier and chief judge, attached to Nekhen, prophet of Maāt (goddess of Truth), giver of laws, advancer of offices, confirming the boundary records, separating a land-owner from his neighbor, pilot of the people, satisfying the whole land, a man of truth before the Two Lands, hereditary prince in judging the Two Lands, supreme head in judgment, putting matters in order, wearer of the royal seal, chief treasurer, Mentuhotep.

Hereditary prince, count, chief of all works of the king, making the offerings of the gods to flourish, setting this land . . . according to the command of the

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god . . . sending forth two brothers satisfied with the utterances of his mouth, upon whose tongue is the writing of Thoth, more accurate than the weight, likeness of the balances, fellow of the king in counseling . . . , giving attention to hear words, like a god in his hour, excellent in heart, skilled in his fingers, exercising an office like him who holds it, favorite of the king before the Two Lands, his beloved among the companions, powerful among the officials, having an advanced seat to approach the throne of the king, a man of confidences to whom the heart opens.

Hereditary prince over the . . . (royal) castle, finding the speech of the palace, knowing that which is in every body (heart), putting a man into his real place, finding matters in which there is irregularity, giving the lie to him that speaks it, and the truth to him that brings it, giving attention, without an equal, good at listening, profitable in speaking, an official loosening the (difficult) knot, whom the king (lit., god) exalts above

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millions, as an excellent man, whose name he knew, true likeness of love, free from doing deceit, whose steps the court heeds, overthrowing him that rebels against the king, hearing the house of the council of thirty, who puts his terror among the barbarians when he has silenced the Sand-dwellers, pacifying the rebels because of their deeds, whose actions prevail in the two regions, lord of the Black Land and the Red Land, giving commands to the South, counting the [number] of the . . . of the Northland, in whose brilliance all men move, pilot of the people, giver of food, advancing offices, lord of designs, great in love, associate of the king in the great castle, hereditary prince, count, chief treasurer, Mentuhotep, he says:

“I am a companion beloved of his lord, doing that which pleases his god daily, prince, count, sem priest, master of every wardrobe of Horus, prophet of Anubis of . . . the hry ydb, Mentuhotep, prince in the seats of ‘Splendor’, at whose voice they (are permitted to) speak in the king’s house, in charge of the silencing of the



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courtiers, unique one of the king, without his like, who sends up the truth to the palace, great herald of good things, alone great, sustaining alive the people. One to whom the great come in obeisance at the double gate of the king's-house; attached to Nekhen, prophet of Maät, pillar [before] the Red Land, overseer of the western highlands, leader of the magnates of South and North, advocate of the people . . . , merinuter priest, prophet of Horus, master of secret things of the house of sacred writings, governor of the (royal) castle, prophet of Harkefti, great lord of the royal wardrobe, who approaches the limbs of the king, overseer of the double granary, overseer of the double silverhouse, overseer of the double gold-house, master of the king's writings of the (royal) presence, wearer of the royal seal, sole companion, master of secret things of the 'divine words' (hieroglyphics), chief treasurer, Mentuhotep."

In the reign of Sesostris III (1887-1849) a certain Sehetepibre was obviously

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a successor to Mentuhotep, for he copied much of the latter's epitaph word for word on his own tombstone. He was "Master of secret things", but it is not expressly said that these included the secret writings.

In the second year of king Neferhotep (probably not very long after 1788) his majesty "spake to the nobles and companions" who were in his suite "the real scribes of the hieroglyphics, the masters of all secrets" (saying) "my heart hath desired to see the ancient writings of Atum, open ye for me for a great investigation". These writings of Atum were, it seems, in the temple at Heliopolis. So these companions said . . . "Let thy majesty proceed to the libraries (house of writings or rolls) and let thy majesty see every hieroglyph." "His majesty proceeded to the library. His majesty opened the rolls, together with these companions. Lo, his majesty found the rolls of

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the house of Osiris . . . lord of Abydos." Travelling thus from Thebes to Heliopolis the king examined the books in the library with his librarians, got the information which he wished, as to how rightly to prepare the temple of Osiris and gave orders to have things carried out accordingly. [Note here what we have before observed that the two librarians appear in his court officially, among his nobles and companions.]

The next three hundred years, including the troubled Hyksos period, is barren of librarian references, if not of librarians. It is in this Hyksos time that Joseph was in Egypt, if indeed he ever was or was in Egypt. Then in the reign of Thutmose III came Senmut.

In this reign (say 1501-1447 B. C.) there was a most interesting and famous historical struggle between Queen Hatshepsut, daughter of Thutmose I, and Thutmose III. The mother of Hatshepsut,

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Ahmose, was daughter of the old royal line and it was through her that the title of Thutmose I came. After the death of Thutmose I, it was a great struggle as to whether Hatshepsut should be Queen or some son of the king's other wives, having no right of succession. As the historian says, "Thutmose III, who was son of the king by an obscure wife, as a young prince of no prospects had been placed in the Karnak temple as a priest with the rank of prophet." The matter seems to have been compromised by marriage between the two which did not end, however, but rather began the feud of the Thutmosids. Thutmose kept trying to limit the honors of Hatshepsut and she on the other hand succeeded, now and then, in putting him into the background. Thutmose was compelled by the adherents of Hatshepsut to make her co-regent. This Queen Hatshepsut is called the "first great woman in history", and "the most

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powerful noble" among her followers was Sennut. He was not vizier, but it is said that he "all but held that office". It is farther said that no doubt the success of the Queen's career was largely due to him. Sennut was a prophet and thought it worthy of record that "he had access to all the writings of the prophets". He was "master of secret things in the temple" and he was royal tutor to the young princess Nefrure. This combination of prophet, tutor, master of secret things, and more especially the fact of his access to the secret writings which were in the charge of the prophets of whom he was himself one, point pretty clearly to a librarianship. The editors of his inscription remark it as interesting that he has put an archaic text, evidently taken from these secret writings, on his own tombstone.

During this same reign of Thutmose III, there appears on the tomb of the

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famous vizier, Rekhmire, a new class of alleged special librarians. In the extremely interesting description of the duties of a vizier, mention is made of the viziers and what is supposed to be the keepers of the viziers' records but what, on the face, seems clearly to refer, not to the keepers of the viziers' records, but to the keepers of other libraries. It appears from the account that, in acting as chief judge in the conducting of a trial, the vizier might often have occasion to send to various libraries or halls of records, and it prescribes that any writing sent for by him from any hall shall, if it does not prove to be a confidential writing, be taken to him with certificates of the keepers, sealed by the officers and the scribes as well. After use it is to be sealed with the seal of the vizier and returned to its place, but it is added: "If he furthermore ask for a confidential writing, then let it not be taken by the keepers thereof."

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Whether this account relates to the vizier's librarians or not, there is specific account of such librarians later.

Rekhmire, himself a vizier, was master of secret things in the temple of Amon, as well as vizier, judge, superintendent of the prophets and priests, and chief of the six chief courts of justice. It may be remarked at this point that the chief judge was also, as chief judge, a sort of librarian in that he had charge of the forty books of the law—the forty "skins" or leather rolls of the law which the vizier must, according to these rules, have open before him when the court was in session. Rekhmire, himself, is, in fact, depicted in this tomb with the forty rolls before him—the picture of a book collection from the 15th century B. C.

During this period and later there are many references to recorders and to the scribes of recorders and these references perhaps imply local records, but it is ex-

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pressly said in these inscriptions of Rekhmire that the records of the nome, or county, are kept in the vizier's hall and it will be safer for us to count the recorders and their scribes as clerks doing the recording rather than librarians in charge of the records.

One of the most famous names in Egyptian literature is that of Amenhotep, the son of Hapi, who lived in the reign of Amenhotep III (1411-1375). It is as author that he is chiefly famous and in later times he was worshipped as a god. It was for proverbs or wisdom literature that he was famed and in an inscription on his tomb at Thebes, it is said, "his name shall abide forever, his sayings shall not perish". It is the irony of fate that only nine proverbs survive under his name, and these are thought to be apocryphal. Amenhotep was a royal scribe, minister of public works, and chief of the prophets of Horus. The latter office possibly, as we



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have seen, implied librarianship and his office as chief king's scribe 'skilful in the divine words' probably implied the same. He records that he was "introduced into the divine book, beheld the excellent things of Thoth, was equipped with all their secrets, and opened all the sacred books"—the same word being used that was used when King Neferhotep went to the library and opened the rolls with the librarians. This, nevertheless, probably refers to reading rather than to keeping the books, and our claim on this famous author as librarian rests on his offices as chief architect and chief prophet—which evidence is not quite up to the standard which we have been setting for ourselves, although its group of corroborations is too strong to let the name be passed.

Something the same thing may be said of the vizier Ramose in the following reign of Ikhnaton or Amenhotep IV, although the evidence is much stronger

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since he is "master of all wardrobes", "master of secret things of the palace", "attached to Nekhen, prophet of Maāt", and chief justice. The combination, especially the "secret things of the palace" forms a pretty explicit reference to the archives, and if so we have the responsible head of the famous Tel-el-Amarna archival library, from which a couple of hundreds of letters from Syria, Palestine, Babylonia, and the kings of the Mitanni and the Hittites still survive. If the vizier was in charge, he like some modern directors, probably gave no direct attention but doubtless had special scribes for the keeping of the documents.

This brings things down to the time when Moses lived, if he did live, whether this was in the time of the Amenhoteps, as some still say, or in the reigns from Ramses II to Seti II, as most aver, for we have no references between. Supposing this latter date to be the case, the

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next reference would be not far from the time when Moses, like many other foreigners, was being brought up with the king's sons in the palace school and in the palace library, while Aaron by the same token, if he was, and if he was what he was said to have been, was cultivating the eloquence which his brother lacked, in the schools for sacred scribes in the libraries of the temple where eloquence as well as writing was taught.

In the first year of the reign of Ramses II, the Great (1292), the king went to Thebes to dedicate a statute to his father. Passing through Abydos he was shocked at the unfinished and ruinous state of the temple of Seti I, and so commanded the "wearer of the royal seal" to "call the court—the king's grandees, all the commanders of the army, all the chiefs of works, and the keepers of the house of rolls (books)". They were brought before his Majesty and delivered themselves

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of a panegyric. When this formality, which included bowing their noses in the dust, their knees upon the earth, smelling the earth, had been completed, the king told them that he had called them on account of a plan that he had to repair the temple. To this the court responded with another panegyric, "and after these utterances" his Majesty commissioned the chiefs of work to carry out his plans. Here again we have the librarians among the members of the court summoned to advise the king about temple building.

In the reign of King Siptah (1215-1209) near the end of the same century, Neferhor, the son of Neferhor, was the "priest of the moon god, Thoth", and "scribe of the archives of Pharoah". He achieved the coveted honor, which he records in certain scribblings in Nubia, of an embassy to the officials of Nubia carrying rewards for the officials and conducting "the king's son of Kush, Seti" on the

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first expedition. In the third year of the same reign, Piyay, king's scribe of the archives of Pharoah, went to Nubia to receive the tribute. This same Seti, who was conducted to Kush by Neferhor, now appears as viceroy of Kush, and describes himself as "king's scribe of the records of Pharoah", the interesting thing about the matter being that this Seti was afterwards King Seti II.

These three "scribes of Pharoah's records" may have had less to do with the keeping, or library side of archival work, than with the book keeping or recording side, but there is a certain presumption that these grandees were more likely to have been at least nominal directors of the archives, than to have had much to do with the clerical side, although, doubtless, the office had much to do with the preparing of records of tribute and the like as well as keeping the documentary records.

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It was about this very time, too, possibly in the reign of this Seti II, that the scribe Anna or Enna lived, a "master of the rolls", who had compiled or had copied the "Tale of two brothers", and to whom it is said we owe a very large part of what has been preserved of old Egyptian literature. This "master of the books" at least had in his collection much that was not archival.

By the time of Ramses III (1198-1167) a somewhat rapid degeneration in public life in Egypt had set in. Power was maintained by the use of a great number of foreign mercenaries and foreign officials in the king's service. The reign was marked by tumultuous strikes on the part of working men amounting almost to a revolution, and very near the end came the famous conspiracy known as the Harem conspiracy. Queen Tiy was at the head of this conspiracy and her son, the royal chamberlain and the royal butler,

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ringleaders with her. The idea was to make way with the King, but the plot miscarried, the conspirators were taken, trial ordered, and the court appointed by the King who, however, died before the trial. One of the charges was that the conspirators had unlawfully secured a "magic roll" of Ramses III . . . his lord. Two of the judges appointed to try the thirty or forty principals and accessories were librarians; Mai, scribe of the archives and Peremhab, likewise scribe of the archives, or according to the translation of Deveria plainly "librarians". Some of the judges presided at one trial and others at another, and the official records of four prosecutions are preserved. Twenty-two were condemned at the first, six at the second, four at the third. All of those who were condemned, were condemned to death and in the case of the second prosecution these included "the great criminal Messui formerly scribe of

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the house of sacred writings, and the great criminal Shedmeszer, formerly scribe of the house of sacred writings." They were allowed to commit suicide and the two librarians and their companions did so on the spot in court. Among those condemned on the third prosecution was the Queen's son tried under an alias to spare the royal feelings. Among the companions of the two librarians condemned on the second prosecution was the general Peyes, and among those of the first prosecution six women, one of whom was presumably the sister of Binenwiese, the captain of archers in Nubia, who was in the Harem and who drew her brother into the plot—although she may have been condemned in some other trial whose records are not preserved. Four out of the fourteen judges were foreigners, and two, as has been said, librarians—two librarians thus among the judges and two among the criminals.



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There is a supplementary fragment in the Papyrus Rollin which includes the charges, in two cases, of the practice of magic and it is hard not to associate these with the two scribes connected with the house of sacred writings, especially as it is said that they committed suicide like the others, and because they were both scribes and the latter obviously a librarian. One of those who were condemned for magic, made magic rolls and gave them into the hands of Pebekkamen, the chamberlain, one of the arch conspirators. The other, however, is more interesting, for it appears that when Penhuibin, overseer of herds, applied to him to "give to me a roll, for enduing me with strength and might" he gave to him, it is said, "a magic roll of Usemare-Meriamon (Ramses III) (now deceased) his lord, and he began to employ the magic powers of a god upon people". Especially he bewitched the guards so that messages could be sent in

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and out without their notice. Since it was one of the King's books which was given or loaned by the criminal, it seems obvious that the latter was a king's librarian.

As librarians we would fain wish that the story stopped here but it does not. Sometime during the trial the chief of police Oneny and the military officer Teynakhte, in charge of the prisoners, took two of the women prisoners and the general Peyes, who was tried with the two librarians in the second prosecution, to the home of the judges, Pebes and Mai. There, in a literal translation of the word used, they "made a beer hall" or had a beer bout. Mai was, it will be remembered, "Scribe of the archives". They were tried for this and officers and judges were all condemned to have their noses and ears cut off because of their disobedience to their instructions, or as it is expressed, "because of their forsaking the good testimony delivered to them". Pebes, having

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been left alone, preferred suicide, but the librarian was not such good stuff.

Ramses IV (1167-1171) furnishes another case of the librarian members of the court. He himself, in his second year, having "entered into the annals and examined the records of the house of sacred writings" commanded the king's companions including again "the scribes and wise men of the house of sacred writings" to prepare to make a certain monument. The following year on the 27th day of the tenth month his majesty himself, after having looked over the ground in the neighborhood of the Hammamat quarries, first ordered Ramses-eshehab, the "Scribe of the house of sacred writings" to make a sort of preliminary survey and then organized an expedition of nearly ten thousand persons to bring blocks from these quarries.

In the reign of Ramses IX (1142-1123) the High Priest Amenhotep, chief

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chief architect, appears in an inscription on the temple of Karnak coming before the King to receive laudatory addresses and more tangible rewards of gold, sweet beer, and sweet oil of gum, with royal grants from the harvests. The King it is said first "spake to cause the Pharoah's "Scribe of rolls to come forth", but it is not quite clear whether this scribe was Amenhotep. Let us hope that it was a librarian who received the six stands filled with sacks of gold, etc., which Amenhotep had at this time.

Under the same Ramses IX, in the famous trial of the royal tomb robbers, there is another allusion to the vizier's archives, and of the deposit in it of a roll and a copy of the records of matters which had been laid before the vizier. This brings the story down to about the middle of the 12th century B. C., a hundred years, more or less, before the birth of King David and some five hundred

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years before Assurbanipal conquered Egypt or finished with his library.

During the two thousand years or so covered we have thus some twenty-one librarians with names, dates and incidents for our biographical dictionary of Egyptian librarians, two more anonymous librarians who made their mark and several other references to plural librarians—a scant survival of the many thousands who followed the profession in Egypt in this time but far indeed from nothing. Some of these men, it appears, were famous in letters and most of them attained high distinction in the state—several were viziers and one became a king. The office itself appears to have been so highly esteemed, you remember, that the temple and palace librarians were ex-officio members of the privy council. There are not many viziers among the librarians of our day nor many king makers like Senmut, yet some of us can remember when Cardi-

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nal Rampolla as Secretary of State exercised some such librarianship over the Vatican library and archives as Ramose may have exercised over the Amarna archives, and it is a matter of no little satisfaction to librarians that Harnack has found the post of library director rewarding. Truth to tell, it may be doubted if these United States of America would not gain something if they imitated this 4500 year old Egyptian example (which seems to have worked well for 1500 years at least) and made the chief librarian of Congress member of the cabinet and ex-officio Secretary of Education! Indeed, why not now and then a library President? When they classify the Presidency under the civil service, and make all candidates for the office take the qualifying examinations under the merit system, perhaps—who knows?

## II

### SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER

There are some things left out of the first paper, for lack of time, which are worth adding to emphasize either the wealth of material or its significance. These relate to what may be called the interpretation of the library gods, Seshait as Hathor, the assistant library gods, the prophet as *ex-officio* librarian, the books of Thoth, and the library of secret writings.

#### INTERPRETING THE LIBRARY GODS

To understand the meaning of Thoth and Seshait and all the many other gods, like Hathor, Neith, Nephthys, Tefnut, etc., with whom they from time to time identify themselves, several things need to be understood.

In the first place, there is the Egyptian

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habit of identifying one god with another or with a human being, impersonating one by the other. In the Book of the Dead the departed soul is himself identified with Osiris and has become an Osiris, and as he recites one or another of the chapters of the book buried with him for this purpose, he impersonates one god or another according to the aspect of thought with which he is dealing at the time. "I am Thoth," he says, "I am Shu," "I am the crocodile god," "I am the heron, the soul of Ra," "I am the jackal of jackals," and so on. Sometimes the impersonation changes and, like one of these performers who impersonates a dozen characters in a single act, the speaker becomes a half dozen persons or professions in a single chapter: "I am Thoth," "I am Tattu the son of Tattu," "I am the priest in Tattu," "I am the prophet in Abydos," "I am the sem priest," "I am the arch craftsman."



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When, therefore, Seshait, Hathor, and Nephthys, are found having a like aspect, it is said that Seshait is one of the forms of Hathor or vice versa, although it might often be better to say when Hathor is found identifying herself with Seshait that Hathor, acting in this capacity, is Seshait.

One of the most familiar phenomena of Egyptian inscriptions is that of the king as god. He describes himself and is described as "god" or "that god"; sometimes as Amon, sometimes as Ra or whoever it may be. When acting in certain capacities or performing certain rites he "is" Thoth or the son of Ra, etc.

In the second place, it needs to be remembered that the names of the gods as used by the Egyptians were a sort of continuous allegory or sustained simile. The bottom meaning is commonly astronomical and the character and actions of the god represent astronomical objects or

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events. The mythologies of all nations have at their base a sort of science of nature especially of astronomical objects. Names are given to the objects and these names treated as persons. The actions of these persons describe first the nature and acts of the objects—which is a sort of science and then these serve to express the thinking in any analogous field of philosophy or theology. The actions of natural objects became thus a sort of universal analogy and form a true, if figurative, language. Thus if the sun is Ra and the moon is Thoth the words express very simple facts in plain enough language. When however it is said that the Lion-god issues from the Bow (Bk. of Dead, Renouf., p. 132, p. 276) it may be translated as Ra (Tefnut-Seshait?) issuing from Thoth or as the Sun reflected from the Moon, itself a nice scientific fact, but in reality the phrase contains also what has been called (by Arago,

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Renouf. Essays 2: 290) "the very delicate observation," "that a line drawn from the center of the sun, bisects at right angles the line which joins the two horns of the crescent"—an arrow shot from the bow would be, or would reach, the sun. These various observations of nature become however so many terms for expressing social, ethical or religious ideas. Thoth is the moon in nature, writing (or expression) in human affairs, and creator and regenerator in the religious world because expression is creation.

One of the commonest themes in mythology is the conflict between light and darkness: Horus and Set, in Egyptian. These two are day and night in nature, intelligence and ignorance in the realm of mind, good and evil in morals, and life and death in religion. When Thoth is brought into this circle of ideas, at the point of the dualism of intelligence

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and ignorance or consciousness and the lack of consciousness, Horus is the active human mind or intelligence, Set is the ignorance which Horus (who in his astronomical aspect is the light of the sun) tries to destroy, and it is Thoth, so this language says, who gives Horus (light) the victory over Set (darkness). Thoth destroys Set and restores to Horus his lost or wounded eye. Astronomically this means that the moon by reflected light destroys the darkness. On the book side it perhaps implies that writing is not the direct but the reflected light of the mind. The healing of the eye of Horus may mean, and probably does mean, the restoration or refreshing of memory by the recorded words, as it certainly means in its application to the future life, the restoration of consciousness. Death was symbolized by the going down of the sun and the coming on of darkness or loss of consciousness. The consciousness was re-

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stored by Thoth through the impartation of truth or knowledge which quickened the new life.

The observation that all expression, and especially written expression, is a reflected light of intelligence, must be counted also "a very nice observation". The fact that books are the cure for ignorance (Thoth slays Set) is simple enough, also that the Moon gives light by night, but why it is that the God of words should be the one to give victory over death is more recondite. It is easy to see the figurative relation, too, between the continued existence of written words and immortality—it is the difference between the ephemeral spoken word and the permanent record. But Thoth is connected with resurrection even more than with immortality. He causes the sun, set in the blackness of night, to rise again, the soul unconscious in death to become conscious again. He does this by breathing in the spirit of

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truth by giving the water and bread of life, which is knowledge or truth. He sanctifies by words and prepares for the last judgment when a man's mind and truth are weighed against one another in the balances. Just what the Egyptian theologians were driving at in all this has not yet been unravelled, but it was on one side close to the idea that conscious life is "thinking" and close to the idea of the Christian idea of the place of the Word and the Spirit of Truth in the doctrines of sanctification, regeneration and eternal life.

But, however, it may be about the more hidden meanings, one meaning of Thoth stands out clearly. As was said in the first paper, Thoth was scribe of the gods "the writing reed (or pen) of the inviolate god", who "utters his words". He "illuminateth thy path with his rays". He has "dispelled darkness". He it is who admits the priest king to the inmost shrine

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where the god dwells and takes down the written oracle. His thirty-six or forty-two books are the fundamental revelation of all the gods. He is, in short, the revealer, the interpreter of the gods to men.

### SESHAIT AND HATHOR

The axis of the various chambers of the temple of Hathor at Denderah is the chambers of the plan of Mariette. This, he says, by position, as well as by meaning, may be considered the innermost shrine of the temple, and it is in fact a résumé of the temple itself. In it the goddess "appears under all her chief forms". It may or may not have contained the portable shrine of the goddess, but the inmost shrine of the temple usually had such a shrine and one may suppose from Mariette's plate 64, from this room, which shows the king opening the door of such a shrine, in which Hathor is with the inscription "the goddess mani-

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feasts herself to me in her secret shrine", that this was in fact the case.

However that may be, in this holy of holies, with this among the pictures on the wall, Thoth figures largely and Hathor herself appears "assimilated to Seshait the goddess of writing". In one of the pictures the king describes himself as son of Thoth and while making an offering to Hathor of the conventional figure of Truth, calls Hathor Truth herself and makes her identical thus with the goddess Maät or Truth. The inscription reads "never does Truth separate herself from this goddess night or day: Truth is the hidden form of Hathor". In corresponding picture "the king presents himself before Hathor accompanied by the goddess Truth herself. Hathor is in this picture assimilated to Seshait the goddess of writing. The king has become initiated into the divine science, has acquired the knowledge of truth, and makes an offer-



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ing of truth to the goddess, while it is the goddess Truth herself who leads him". In another picture, the king is again opening the seal of the door which is elsewhere described as the office of Thoth. Attention has already been called to Hathor as carrying the books of Thoth to Ra and as identical with Seshait in this capacity. In another room of this same temple (E.) Hathor is assimilated with Isis but with Isis in a particular role as the inventor of writing. As is well known Hathor, the mother goddess, is one of the favorite figures among the Egyptian gods. Her worship is very ancient, and she is most thoroughly identified with Isis. She, however, when looked upon as the mother of the sciences perhaps is obviously assimilated with the goddess of writing, but the interesting and significant matter is that this assimilation should be indicated as the very central meaning of her nature in the very heart of the temple.

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An interesting corollary to the matter is what must be counted for the present pure hypothesis. It arises from the fact that a golden image of Hathor is described in room z as being in a double chest—a chest within a chest such as is common in the case of coffins. Since it is not excluded that there may have been statues (and in later times it would be likely) and since papyri have been found in the space between the double coffins, it is possible that the inner case contained a statue and that writings were in the between space. This in turn would account for the blind expression regarding the Hebrew ark where the tables were within but other objects or books were laid up beside the ark.

## THE ASSISTANTS OF THOTH

The seven divine masters or sages who assist Thoth are, according to Renouf, the inventors and patrons of all the arts and sciences. They are the offspring of the

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cow, Mehurit, and were hawk formed or human headed hawks. They have been identified with the seven stars of the Great Bear (Thoth being here the north star) and with the seven cows of the Book of the Dead (Chap. 148) who "give bread and drink to the glorified soul"—this bread and drink being knowledge. They have been identified also with the seven Rishis of the Sanskrit literature. Their characterization in the Book of the Dead is quite esoteric and on the face of it not particularly winsome, but the somewhat bloodthirsty language of these assistant librarian gods will undoubtedly sometime find its interpretation in terms of books and knowledge.

The account is as follows: "Oh ye Seven Divine Masters who are the arms of the Balance on the Night wherein the Eye is fixed; ye who strike off the heads and cleave the necks, who seize the hearts and drag forth the whole hearts,

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and accomplish the slaughter in the Tank of Flame . . . live in me and let me live in you. Convey to me the Symbol of Life and the Sceptre.

### PROPHETS AND MASTERS OF SECRET THINGS

A certain interesting light on the question of whether the prophets were always by virtue of their office sacred librarians, and not without its relation to the title "masters of secret things", is found in the inscriptions on some of the crypts of the temple at Denderah, where it is said, speaking of the secret things, "the place is secret and no one knows where it is. If they shall search for its entrance no one will find it, *except the prophets* of the goddess". These crypts contained apparently a library, for the crypt number four contains a catalogue of five books which are thought to have been contained in the temple library. It must be said, however,

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that Mariette considers that the library at Denderah, which contained these five works, may have been a sort of portable cabinet placed in what is the least mysterious of all the rooms.

In Chapter XIV of the Book of the Dead, Thoth is addressed as the god "who presideth over *all* the secret things". This may be put in connection with the inscription given in Breasted, where the real scribes of the hieroglyphs are the "masters of *all* secrets". It would seem to follow from these quotations at least that the masters of secret things were always prophets and that they always had under their charge the secret writings as well as other things. It does not follow so clearly that all prophets had access to or charge of the secret writings.

### THE BOOKS OF THOTH

It is not always clear whether the books of Thoth are the books which are written

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by him or the books over which he has charge. He, indeed, does not always seem to have charge even of his own writings for it speaks in the Book of the Dead of "she who directs the morning light in her time and observes the mid-day heat, the lady of the books written by Thoth himself". Remembering, however, that among the gods all written matters, whether they are uttered by Amon or Ptah or whatever god, are supposed to be written down by Thoth, and remembering farther that the king, when he is represented as writing, identifies himself with Thoth, it is readily seen how all sacred books whether of Thoth's authorship or not may be called the books of Thoth. The Book of the Dead which contains books of Thoth is perhaps to be regarded as a collection of nearly 200 books of Thoth. What the relation of this is to the books of the Nile god and the known collections of the books of Thoth would be an interesting

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matter for special study. It is certain that there was no fixed collection of books meant by this for the three extant catalogues of such collection, that given in the *Stromata* of Clemens Alexandrinus, that on the walls of the little Library of Edfu, and the five titles from the Library of Denderah found in inscriptions there, do not agree. It seems, therefore, rather clear that, in general, by books of Thoth is meant simply the temple library or perhaps the library of sacred writings in the temple—the “collection of books put under the guardianship of Thoth”.

### THE SHRINE-LIBRARY

There is an interesting line of evidence which seems to point to the most holy object of the holy of holies of the Egyptian temples, the focus of Egyptian worship, as being in the earliest period simply a chest of writings. It is not questioned that the portable shrine, kept in the holy

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of holies, was a box or chest or cabinet. This portable shrine was often, and in later times generally, in a miniature boat, which, however, was not placed in the water but carried on the shoulders of the priests in procession. This boat was metaphorical of the barque of Ra and the shrine has often been supposed to contain a secret statue of the god—this being a reasonable guess from the undoubted fact that the god was supposed to reside in this shrine, and the probability that in later times at least it did contain such a statue.

It is agreed, however, that this is only guess as to earlier times since the Egyptians were so painstakingly secret about the matter that no direct hint, it is said, of the contents was ever given among the myriads of inscriptions on the walls as to what actually was within this inmost shrine. In view, however, of what has been said about the part that Thoth played in the philosophy of life and death and



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revelation, it is not so certain that the inscriptions do not, in the first place, show that the Naos did not contain the statue at times, and in the second place, suggest that it did contain secret writings and perhaps writings only at some times.

To begin with, it sometimes appears that when a god was consulted in the holy of holies his statue was brought in and placed in a certain niche in the wall. This would not prove that there was not also a secret statue in the chest in the middle of the room if there was evidence for the latter, but in the absence of such evidence it makes the hypothesis of a statue within rather pointless.

On the other hand, there is an extraordinary series of related representations which in their allegorical language seem to point to writings as the contents of the shrine, and putting these together with the nature of the case and its circumstances and with hints from the comparative his-

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tory of oracles, there seems strong, if not conclusive, evidence for the fact.

Considering first the nature of the case, it is evident and well understood that the meaning of the inmost or hindmost part of the temple, the innermost sanctuary, or holy of holies, not in Egypt only but among Babylonians, Hittites, Jews, and Greeks, is that it is the place where the god meets man. In Egypt it is generally the King alone who has access and the recent Hittite excavations show the same thing, in that there is a figure of the god welcoming the priest-king with open arms. It is the place to which man resorts in order to meet his god and to inquire of him. It is, in short, the oracle. This in Egyptian religion at least is so often evidenced on monuments as to be a truism.

The next step of circumstance is the fact that these oracles were commonly, if not always, written. Sometimes they

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were written by the priest or king and presented to the statue of the god, which had been brought in and put in the niche in the wall, and the god would make sign of yes or no. Sometimes the oracles were oral, but were in fact written down by the inquirer, and, in short, it must not be forgotten that, in many of these interviews, the king or priest is represented as identifying himself with the god, becoming assimilated to the god and speaking in the first person: "I am Ra". What he writes, therefore, the god writes. (A good example of this is Hall E at Denderah where the king "is constantly assimilated to Thoth".) In any event, the oracles were written down as the words of the god residing in the shrine and in the first person.

The second circumstance is thus that the oracles, being written, must have been kept somewhere, and where more naturally than where they were given? And

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since from time to time these old oracles, the writings of Atum and Thoth, or whatever god, were consulted, it is natural that the place of consultation should be the same as the place of original utterance. As the holy of holies was the place to which the king priest resorted to obtain an oracle so it would naturally be the place to which he would go if instead of fresh oracles he sought only knowledge of a former utterance, and naturally, if not necessarily, the place where all divine utterances which might be sought would be kept. A priori it is hard to see how the priest could think of keeping the written oracles in any other place than the place of utterance, and if in the holy of holies, where else than in the shrine?

Another circumstance is the fact that the form of the shrine, especially in the old times, so often resembled the book-chest of later times—a fact which holds true of the later Jewish synagogue ark,

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with reference to the Hebrew shrine or ark, as well as among the Egyptians.

It is, however, when these circumstances are put in connection with the general doctrines of the Egyptians and interpreted in the light of their allegorical language that they become really significant.

In the first place, one of the fundamental and common religious ideas among the Egyptians was that the voice and still more the written word was the god incarnate—the word was the god. These written words were, therefore, regarded as the real incarnation of the divine voice by which all things were created, which was the only god. The spoken word was ephemeral and passing. The abiding word was the written record. The writings were the real god. They constituted his person. When the god was carried in procession, it was his words not his statue which was carried.

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From a bibliographical standpoint, therefore, the conclusion seems irresistible that the original simple chest was a library to which the priest resorted when inquiry was made as to the will of the gods and in which he placed the written oracles.

Once started on this track and the bibliographical evidences from the nature of Thoth and Seshait swarm to confirmation. Take the case of Hathor at Denderah, as given above, where we have Thoth unsealing the door and Hathor in her shrine assimilated to or transformed into Seshait, the goddess of writing, the mistress of libraries. As a mere matter of language it could hardly be plainer if it were said that Hathor in her shrine was Hathor's oracles in writing.

The external evidence in the same direction is almost equally striking, if not in direct Egyptian evidence, at least in comparative religions. And indeed if Ebers' remark, that boxes of writings are

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often found in Egypt under the feet of the gods, can be substantiated, then it seems likely that at some period the shrine was made with the figure of the god on top and his utterances were kept in the book-chest on which he stood. Such cases occur to the writer of this paper, as books under images of Thoth and of Anubis and other books discovered in the "secret shrine" of a certain goddess.

The case among the Greeks and Hebrews is perhaps more specific, for a character of Aristophanes speaks of having a chest full of oracles and the word for chest is that used in the Septuagint of the Hebrew Ark. And it is clear enough that among the Hebrews (whether it was 500 or 1200 B. C. is not very important to the argument) the definite notion of the oracles kept in a book-chest beneath the place where they were uttered was well understood, as appears from the account of this Ark of the Testimonies ( or oracles).

### III

## SOURCES

The chief sources used and the most accessible and best sources for the average library are the Book of the Dead and J. A. Breasted's Ancient Records (Chicago University Press, 1905-7, 5 v.). The latter is one of the best models existing, in any field or any language, of sources made available for practical scholarly use. It is a gathering up of all the important historical inscriptions, arranged in chronological order, with sufficient exposition, admirable notes, reliable translation, and exhaustive indexes. It is worth all the other scores of sources used, on the side of the historical inscriptions.

The translation of the Book of the Dead which has been most used is that of Renouf, completed by Naville (Paris, 1907). Renouf's insistence on translating the pivotal word *Maât*, now as law



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or righteousness, and now as truth, according to circumstances, happens to be confusing and misleading in this particular matter of the book aspects but the translation is probably the best one for the general student and in most matters. As a matter of fact, the translation as "right" or "law" or "righteousness" is undoubtedly correct translation, but the word "truth" really contains in English all the various shades which the translator intends to convey by his varied translation and the "two truths" give a much more vivid English conception of what is really meant than "truth and law" or "truth and righteousness" even—at least when one is investigating from the point of view of the relation of truth and word and book and library.

In addition to these first sources the publications of the Egypt Exploration Fund, The Egyptian Research Account and other current exploration accounts

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such as those of Mr. Theodore M. Davis form an accessible and rich source. The books of Erman and Wilkinson contain many verbatim quotations and are found in every library. Then there are the collected works such as those of Renouf and the *Bibliothèque égyptologique*. After these there is the great mass of splendid records of the older excavations of which Mariette's *Denderah* (Paris, 1875), has proved one of the more fruitful among the older sources. As introduction to the mythological side, the *Dizionario di Mitologia Egizia* of Lanzone (Torino 1881-6) is still the most helpful aid as introduction to research, because of its quoted translations and superb list of references to sources. It is unfortunate that this is now very hard to get and costly. The best first introduction to the historical side is the admirable little history of Breasted. The somewhat larger illustrated edition is perhaps better for the general library

but hardly better for orientation. Petrie's history of Egypt contains a vast amount of considerable quotations from the inscriptions and references to the monuments so that it is a real thesaurus of translated sources and is, after Breasted, the readiest source for what may be called amateur research.



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